Leading the Foodservice/Hospitality Industry

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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ASSUMPTIONS ON SECOND-HAND SMOKE NOT HOLDING UP UNDER SCIENTIFIC SCRUTINY

CRS Study Reinforces Concerns Raised By Restaurant Industry Last Year

Washington, D.C. -- November 14, 1995 -- Restaurant industry leaders were gratified by a Congressional Research Service (CRS) study released today that calls the 1992 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declaration on environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) into question.

The CRS findings "bolster the questions we asked about the validity of EPA's research a year-and-a-half ago," said Ralph O. Brennan, president of the National Restaurant Association. In August 1994, the Association filed 25 pages of comments with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), which had proposed a sweeping indoor air quality standard for the workplace largely based on EPA's classification of ETS as a human carcinogen.

As the Association pointed out in its comments, there is no scientific consensus on whether the EPA study -- which focused exclusively on long-term, at-home exposure -- can support conclusions that ETS exposure is hazardous in the workplace. Indeed, some critics

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THE NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION 75 YEARS

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have charged that EPA manipulated the statistics to create a pre-determined outcome, and that the EPA risk assessment did not meet the accepted protocols for chemistry, toxicology and epidemiology.

"Until now, the debate on ETS has been driven by media hyperbole and political considerations, not by dispassionate scientific review," observed Brennan. "We recognize that no risk analysis will ever satisfy the emotions of the proponents on either side of this issue. However, without sufficient scientific research, the restaurant industry can take no position on the question of safety or hazard of ETS."

The restaurant industry leader further pointed out that, according to CRS data, the risk associated with workplace exposure to ETS is infinitesimal compared to the many risks Americans casually accept every day (such as getting into a car to reach one's workplace).

Finally, noting that many restaurants have already gone smoke-free in response to customer demand, the National Restaurant Association reiterated the suggestion it made in its comments to OSHA last year: that a more realistic approach to this issue would be for OSHA to recognize the continuing effectiveness of those market forces and allow them to operate without government interference. Such an approach would eliminate ETS in restaurants where customers demanded it.

And ultimately, added Brennan, "those same market forces work just as effectively among employees as they do among consumers."

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